

Review of Loureiro-Porto, Lucía. 2024. *Pragmatic Markers in World Englishes: Kind of and sort of as a Case in Point*. València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València. ISBN: 978-8-411-18306-2. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7203/PUV-OA-307-9>

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Pragmatics is one of the most vibrant fields in present-day linguistics, with an abundance of publications covering a broad range of phenomena and their representation in different linguacultural contexts. It comes as a bit of a surprise, then, that the pragmatic study of World Englishes has only become a major concern of the field somewhat recently (compared to, for instance, research on the morphosyntactic and phonetic properties of varieties of English). The monograph *Pragmatic Markers in World Englishes: Kind of and sort of as a Case in Point* by Lucía Loureiro-Porto is a new study in the growing body of publications using variationist tools to study pragmatic markers in different varieties of English. The author presents an empirical, corpus-based study of *kind of* and *sort of* across two ‘Inner-Circle’ varieties, British (BrE) and American English (AmE), and two ‘Outer-Circle’ varieties, Singapore English (SingE) and Philippine English (PhilE).

Chapter 1 offers an introduction both to the book’s central framework as well as its aims and structure. On the very first page, the author points out that one of the central questions in World Englishes has been whether they are “becoming more similar or more distinct from each other” (p. 9). The focus is thus clearly on the notions of ‘convergence’ and ‘divergence’, two concepts of biggest importance in sociolinguistics. In addition to setting the thematic scope, the introduction also provides a brief overview of pragmatic markers, including both traditional and newer approaches, and a first insight into current studies into pragmatic markers in World Englishes. Finally, the introduction also outlines the monograph’s aims and structure. The volume’s main aim is “to provide a syntactic



and semantic-pragmatic characterization of the pragmatic markers *kind of* and *sort of*” (p. 16) in BrE, AmE, SingE, and PhilE.

Chapter 2 further sets the stage by discussing the origins and development of *kind of* and *sort of*. After an overview of the historical origins of the forms (Germanic for *kind of* and Romance for *sort of*), the main focus of the chapter is on the various linguistic processes that have affected the forms over time. Importantly, as emphasised by Hopper and Traugott (2003) and as established in the chapter, several important processes, such as reanalysis and grammaticalisation, are interconnected and cannot be teased apart neatly. Based on several aspects in the development of the two forms, however, “the diachronic evolution of *kind of* / *sort of* is considered as an illustration of grammaticalization” (p. 40).

In Chapter 3, the focus shifts to expressions of *kind of* and *sort of* in Inner-Circle contexts. After an overview of potential realisations and the semantic functions of *kind of* and *sort of*, a section is devoted to the pragmatic description of the two forms as stance markers and hedging devices. The chapter also explains the terminological choice of referring to the two constructions as ‘pragmatic markers’ (as opposed to one of the many other terminological options in use to describe these two and similar forms).

The focus then shifts to Outer-Circle contexts in Chapter 4. First, the chapter provides an overview of key models of World Englishes but explains that Kachru’s (1985) Circles model is chosen as the dominant model due to its handy terminology and categorisation. This overview is followed by a survey of the four varieties in focus, BrE, AmE, SingE, and PhilE, and pragmatic differences between Inner- and Outer-Circle contexts. The term used to describe the study of pragmatics in World Englishes from a variationist angle is ‘postcolonial pragmatics’, which takes into account the fact that essential pragmatic concepts, such as face, may differ greatly between a given postcolonial society and a ‘traditional’, Inner-Circle context. The chapter closes with a brief overview of previous studies on pragmatic markers in SingE and PhilE.

Chapter 5 represents the core empirical chapter of the monograph. The methodological section at the beginning of the chapter introduces the data source for the analysis, the *Corpus of Global Web-based English* (GloWbE; Davies 2013). The author describes the corpus and its advantages but, importantly, also points out its drawbacks (such as the lack of insight into details about how the texts in the corpus were produced, and by whom). The section on the corpus is followed by a description of methodological

choices made for the analysis, such as how an appropriate sample was selected, and which variables are of importance in the analysis. This part leads into the actual analysis, starting with an overview of the overall results and frequency statistics before a closer look at the syntactic positions of *kind of* and *sort of* and a semantic and pragmatic analysis. A key finding of the pragmatic analysis confirms the “coexistence of the hedging and stance marker function” (p. 111), which appears to be prevalent in the dataset.

In Chapter 6, the processes of Americanisation and colloquialisation are employed to explain, at least to some extent, the tendencies identified in the data. Americanisation is taken as a promising candidate to interpret the closeness of the SingE to the AmE data, with the idea that SingE has, in a sense, ‘caught up’ compared to PhilE that historically originated as an AmE-based variety. Colloquialisation, in turn, affects language as “the process that refers to the tendency of the written language to incorporate features that are associated with the spoken conversational language” (p. 119; see Mair 1997). While both Americanisation and colloquialisation are attractive in explaining the findings, the chapter concludes with a final section that clarifies, importantly, that things are not that simple. In particular, the contrasting forces of global and local preferences need to be taken into account for a comprehensive picture.

Finally, Chapter 7 offers a conclusion and an outlook. After summaries of the volume’s chapters, the author makes a plea for more diversified and larger datasets, in particular ones that include more varieties and, potentially, more samples for analysis.

The present monograph is a valuable contribution to the empirical study of pragmatic markers and offers both a detailed review of previous work and new findings derived from (admittedly complicated) data. Something to appreciate in particular is the care with which arguments are made in the book. While the author is clear about the direction of her research and the interpretation of the findings, she is also careful about leaving room for alternative ways of looking at the investigated constructions and why their frequencies and properties may differ across varieties. This carefulness is also applied to GloWbE as a corpus, which contains notoriously tricky data (see, for instance, the summary in Shakir and Deuber 2023). However, I would also argue that —while there are many things to praise about the title— there are also some aspects that hold it back in certain ways. My main criticism concerns the book’s composition and overall structure: a substantial amount of space is devoted to fleshing out the backdrop of the study, including the historical origins of *kind of* and *sort of* and their functions, but also models

of World Englishes and so forth. That is not a problem in itself, but at ca. 130 pages of running text, the book is comparatively short and more akin to recent shorter publication formats, such as Cambridge Elements, than it is to more typical full-length monographs. My impression is that the book sits somewhat uncomfortably between a lengthier article and a fully-fledged monograph, which could have perhaps been dealt with by reorganising some of the chapters. This impression is exacerbated by the great level of detail given to background literature in the earlier chapters of the book but the at times slightly less detailed methodology and results section. For instance, on page 84, the author introduces the variables that are supposed to be analysed later on, but we learn about them in more detail only as part of the analysis and not in the methodological section itself. I was also wondering about the internal structure of some chapters, in particular Chapter 3, which, per its title, is about *kind of* and *sort of* in Inner-Circle Englishes, but doubles in function as an introduction to the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of the two markers (which seems odd, since those dimensions are clearly also relevant to other varieties). Apart from these more structural concerns, there is also a noticeable number of editing issues and typos (such as *many* instead of *may* on p. 11 or a full stop that became part of a footnote on p. 69), but these do not take away from the study in any meaningful way.

Overall, despite some caveats, I would certainly recommend this study to anyone with an interest in pragmatic variation in World Englishes. The substantial level of detail provided on *kind of* and *sort of* is extremely useful as an overview and the empirical analysis is solid and offers another small piece to the puzzle of pragmatic variation across varieties of English.

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